



ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY TRAINING WORKSHOP

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The United States Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM) Theater Security Cooperation Program for Central America reached a new level of success with the completion of the Environmental Security Training Workshop in Alajuela, Costa Rica. The seven-day conference graduated 30 military, police, and civilian agency professionals from seven Central American countries in a ceremony attended by regional defense and environmental ministers. This “train the trainer” workshop is the culmination of a nearly decade-long SOUTHCOM, Department of Defense (DOD), and U.S. Army War College Center for Strategic Leadership (CSL) Environmental Security Program.

BACKGROUND

In 1996 the SOUTHCOM Commander, General Wesley K. Clark, asked then Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Environmental Security, Ms. Sherri W. Goodman, to create an environmental strategy for the SOUTHCOM Area of Responsibility. The CSL helped craft that strategy and in 1998, when subsequent commander General Charles Wilhelm asked Ms. Goodman for an Environmental Security Annex to his Theater Engagement Plan, the CSL headed the team that drafted that document. This annex promulgated an interagency approach to regional environmental security cooperation and in 2001 the Department of State Regional Environmental Hub at the U.S. Embassy in San Jose, Costa Rica co-hosted, with SOUTHCOM, DOD, and the CSL, the Environmental Security Conference for Central America and the Caribbean.



This 2001 event, attended by the president and vice-president of Costa Rica, brought together the Ministers of Defense and the Ministers of Environment for the Central American countries. At the conference the ministers agreed to the concept of military support to civilian authority on critical regional environmental issues. Over the next four years the SOUTHCOM, DOD, and CSL conducted regional environmental security workshops in Costa Rica and Honduras, and major conferences in Paraguay, Uruguay, and Belize. These activities were supported by a wide variety of U.S. government agencies, non-governmental organizations and regional organizations.

ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY TRAINING COURSE

The SOUTHCOM Environmental Security Training Course for Central America was conducted on the campus of INCAE in Alajuela, Costa Rica, January 17-24, 2005 by the CSL, the office of the SOUTHCOM Engineer, and the International Resources Group, with the invaluable support of the U.S. Embassy San Jose Regional Environmental Hub and the Office of Defense Representative. The mission of this workshop was to provide the

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Armed Forces, Police Corps and the environmental officials of the Central American region with the tools and knowledge to teach environmental security issues within their institutions and countries, and to promote regional defense cooperation. The workshop incorporated the objectives of SOUTHCOM's Theater Security Cooperation Plan, Embassy Mission Performance Plans, and the advice of the region's defense organizations.

The objectives of the workshop were to:

- Strengthen and improve the relationship among the armed forces, police, environmental officials, and civil society in support of the natural resources within the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor.
- Create a group of trained military and civilian officials with the capacity to prepare for and respond to the region's natural or manmade disasters.
- Identify areas for cooperation for these groups in the fight to prevent illegal activities within the region.
- Provide a training methodology to strengthen the capacity to address security problems that could threaten democratic governance.
- Promote cooperation on transnational threats such as the smuggling of drugs and endangered species, narco-terrorism, and environmental terrorism.

The purpose of the training workshop was to develop regional defense force capacity to support civilian authority in addressing environmental issues that are related to regional security. Over the course of this SOUTHCOM program the military role in environmental response has built governmental legitimacy and respect for the armed forces. The importance of this benefit to democracy was highlighted recently during the catastrophic earthquake and tsunami in the Pacific, when the spiritual head of the Al Qaeda franchise Jemaah Islamiyah, Abu Bakar Bashir, said that he is losing the battle for the hearts and minds of Aceh's survivors because of the humanitarian assistance from the armed forces.



ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY

The role of environmental issues in security affairs is not just restricted to the Pacific and Central America. In 1991, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization revised its strategic concept in response to the fall of the Soviet Union. In its Rome meetings, the drafters of the strategic concept stated clearly, "Risks to allied security are less likely to result from calculated aggression... but rather from the adverse consequences of instabilities...faced by many countries...security and stability have political, economic, social and environmental elements as well as the indispensable defense dimension. Managing the diversity of challenges facing the Alliance requires a broad approach to security."



Environmental security has many advantages. It is non-threatening, transcends tensions, affects all countries, is an appropriate military role, is low cost, and promotes interagency and international cooperation. Moreover, addressing environmental security issues prevents tensions that could lead to conflict by promoting multi-lateral communication and cooperation. Executing environmental security missions creates positive new roles for the military and builds governmental legitimacy in the eyes of the people. This creates support for democracy and leverages inter-agency and international resources.

Why should the military be involved in addressing important environmental issues? The answer is straightforward and easy to justify. Most governmental organizations responsible for environmental and disaster response are relatively under-staffed and under-resourced. They often lack the manpower to undertake the activities necessary to most efficiently accomplish their broad-based mission. The military, by working with these organizations, allows them to accomplish a great deal more without the addition of scarce governmental financial resources. The military has excellent communications capabilities and often has the government's best transportation assets. Unlike most governmental organizations, it is present on the frontier and in distant and sensitive border areas where narcotics and endangered species are often smuggled across the borders by the same organizations, and where new diseases may first appear. The military has technical expertise in its engineer units and has well-developed planning and operational management skills. The military already has a national security mission and has the responsibility to prepare for and respond to large-scale natural and man-made national disasters.

WORKSHOP RESULTS

This training workshop should encourage further visionary recommendations on the part of the Defense and Environment Ministers of Central American countries that will enable the armed forces of the region to broaden their support to civilian democratic authority. The benefits of defense environmental security work will continue to grow in the areas of building governmental legitimacy, reducing the loss of life and human suffering associated with natural and man-made disasters, and in sustaining the precious resource base upon which the future economic vitality of the nations depend.

The workshop supported the National Military Strategy objective of promoting security by using security cooperation to build trust and confidence between the U.S. and its multinational partners, and by encouraging nations to develop, modernize, and transform their own capabilities. Additionally the workshop addressed the objective of creating a global anti-terrorism environment by supporting partner nation efforts to deny state sponsorship, support, and sanctuary to terrorist organizations, to diminish the conditions that enable terrorism to flourish, and to help establish favorable security conditions and increase the capabilities of partners. It also supported the USSOUTHCOM vision of using environmental security, disaster preparedness, and counterterrorism efforts as part of a well-developed Theater Security Cooperation Program to build capacity, combat potential regional terrorist threats, and create lasting defense security cooperation between the Central American states and the United States.



Substantial multilateral cooperation was developed during the workshop. Representatives of Belize worked closely with Costa Rican Coast Guard officers to explore best practices in Coast Guard operations and management pursuant to the April initiation of the Belize Coast Guard. Outside of the workshop agenda many attendees explored best practices of other countries in addressing such important issues as building governmental legitimacy, dealing with difficult customs issues on cross-border crimes, and enforcing marine resource and security regulations.

ATTENDEE RECOMMENDATIONS

At the conclusion of the training workshop, representatives from each country formed a committee to evaluate the effectiveness of current regional environmental security programs and to make recommendations for future activities. This group was led by Mr. Jorge Dominguez, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, El

Salvador. At the graduation ceremony, Mr. Dominguez presented the committee's recommendations and findings to the attending Defense and Environment Ministers:

- Utilize the Central American Commission on Environment and Development (CCAD) to obtain synergies between the Ministers of Defense, Security, and Environment.
- Designate a technical liaison for environmental security issues to represent the institutions of defense, security, and environment before the CCAD, with the objective of coordinating environmental protection efforts.
- Raise financial resources with the international community to strengthen the development of environmental security projects in the Central American region.
- Develop Environmental Security Courses at the national level in each country with the support from the CCAD.

These insights will help guide future Central American security cooperation activities and follow on activities of the USSOUTHCOM Theater Security Cooperation Program.

In addition to this paper, an individual issue paper has been written addressing each individual scenario of the workshop in slightly greater detail. These may be found on the USAWC/CSL web site at <http://www.carlisle.army.mil/usacsl/IPapers.asp>.

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